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ABSTRACT

This document consists of three separate brief articles by the same author on the subject of "business-education partnerships and industry-education cooperation," extracted from three different newsletters (not fully identified). The author is president of the National Association for Industry-Education Cooperation. The first article, "Business Education: Rhetoric Outstrips Reality," focuses on understanding that the real reason for business/industry participation in elementary and secondary education is a recognition that the entire educational system needs help. Suggestions are made regarding how business/industry and education can get organized into a local, broad-based industry-education council type of structure. The second article, "Business-Education Partnerships in the Last Decade: Rhetoric over Substance," also addresses basic steps in organizing industry and education (public and postsecondary) into a broad formal structure/alliance--an Industry-Education Council with support staff--to start incremental and substantive collaboration in fostering school improvement. Career education is promoted as a key objective and integral part of the industry-education collaborative school improvement process. The third article, "Making Sense of It All: Role in Systemwide School Improvement," argues that the real reason for business-education collaboration is the development of an academic and vocational program that better meets the needs of both students and employers. It recommends a much broader level of commitment of resources by industry. (YLB)

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BUSINESS-EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

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Business/Education: Rhetoric Outstrips Reality

by Donald M. Clark

It's time for employers and educators in our public schools to get their acts together after a wasted decade of misdirected rhetoric and redundant research, reports and forums on the role of business/industry in improving education.

Spare me another article and conference like the ones we've been drowning in since 1980, highlighting corporate participation in education that typically involves short-term, student-oriented projects in a classroom here and a school there, or what can be characterized as "tinkering at the margin."

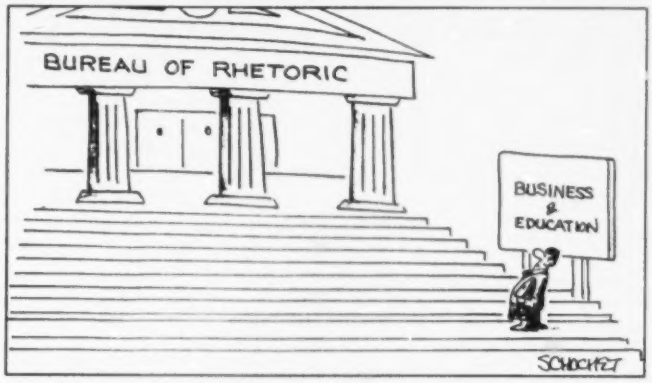
Also, let's put aside for a moment the frequently used buzzwords these days inside the Washington, D.C. beltway, such as "the challenge of the global marketplace," "maintaining economic competitiveness," and "restructuring our schools."

What is urgently needed in entering this decade is for employers to tune out the school-reform rhetoric and tune into the reality that their survival depends on an education system capable of delivering quality human resources to the workplace now and into the 21st century. And all those student-oriented projects they have grown to know and love and invested most of their resources in during the past decade—while needed and useful—have had little, if any, impact in fostering substantive school improvement.

Here we are in the winter of 1991 with corporate America facing an emerging human resource crisis. Simply put, employers are running out of skilled, motivated and productive work entrants; the school reform movement of the past decade has been a charade in terms of effecting significant improvement in education; there is no systematic or systemwide plan in place for preparing students for work; and business/industry-education interaction during the 1980s has been conducted, for the most part, on a fragmented, unstructured, duplicative, uncoordinated, and ad hoc basis.

Further, a considerable number of corporate chief executive officers, chief school officers, governors, and state legislators remain not fully understanding of the scope and enormity of what must be done in improving the nation's primary human resource delivery system—our schools. Let's face it, we can't afford another period like the '80s of redefining the problems in our schools and engaging the employment community on a piecemeal basis in furthering educational reform/improvement and preparation for work in our school systems.

The good news is that the proven structures and processes for fostering business/industry-education collaboration in school improvement, preparation for work through career education, and human resource/economic development were already in place prior to the last decade. However, the disturbing news centers around the situation in which the research and policy issue types in the last decade had far better access to the press and other media channels for their message than the practitioners who had extensive experience and responsibilities in establishing and maintaining exemplary employer-education alliances and systemwide career education programs in the 1960s and '70s.



The starting point, therefore, for understanding the *real* reason for business/industry participation in elementary and secondary education is a recognition that *the entire educational system needs help.* And if the employment community accepts the proposition that it has a central role in helping our schools develop a more responsive academic and vocational education program which better meets the needs of both students and employers—the primary thrust of the school improvement process—it follows that both sectors need to take the first step and *get organized.* This requires bringing together the business, industry, education (public/private/postsecondary), labor, government, and professional leadership—the clout—of a community into a local, broad-based industry-education council (IEC) type of formal structure.

The systemwide advisory IEC is an umbrella mechanism through which the employment community can channel its volunteer resources (personnel, facilities, materials and equipment) into the entire school program in a coherent and cost-effective manner for the primary purpose of fostering educational improvement. The focus of the IEC and business/industry's investment in helping reshape/redirect academic and vocational education is in key areas that have been overlooked, for the most part, in the rhetoric of the '80s.

Here I refer to an IEC collaborative school improvement process emphasizing:

- Business/industry-education joint planning, developing an economic and employment assessment of the area labor market, establishing an occupational information system for public, private and postsecondary education, and providing leadership and an appropriate level of resources for curriculum revision;
- Intensive, comprehensive and continuing in-service training of teachers, counselors, administrators, and other support staff, particularly in the area of career education;
- Upgrading instructional materials and equipment;
- And improving the effectiveness and efficiency of educational management.

Networks of local IECs have been operational in states such as California, Arizona, New York, and Colorado, and in the province of Ontario, Canada since the mid-1960s. Many are incorporated as nonprofit organizations. They are managed by an executive director/coordinator with a support staff and budget to implement a long-term program of educational improvement.

The councils also serve as a catalyst for meeting employer training needs and entrepreneurship education, central to an area's economic development, and improving the coordination of existing advisory groups and community-based organizations interfacing with the educational system.

This proven collaborative structure of the '60s and '70s can make the difference in this decade and beyond. I directed an IEC in western New York with an impressive track record in fostering school improvement.

Nevertheless, the policy-issue types most likely will continue to ignore the lessons of these two decades and discuss and debate ad nauseum issues such as those related to school reform, national educational goals, parental choice in schools, accountability, school-to-work transition, and Workforce 2000. Concurrently, corporate and philanthropic foundations can be expected to support, as in the past as their priority, discreet educational projects in various subject areas and for student-oriented activities and target populations and schools which have little, if any, impact on school improvement.

These anticipated developments are hardly what I would call an appropriate response to a public educational system that is deteriorating, and a human resource crisis which is worsening.

What it comes down to, in my view, is that once business/industry and education accept the reality that change in education occurs from the ground up; local business/industry and education practitioners—not government bureaucrats, think tanks and redundant research and demonstration projects—will make the difference in fostering educational improvement; and effecting long-term change in our schools requires hard work, patience, discipline, commitment, and money through an IEC type structure and process, they can expect to see measurable progress similar to the kind those of us in the trenches experienced in the '60s and '70s.

And let's stop raising the recurrent issue about holding educators accountable for student achievement in standardized test scores and grades. As a former senior-high school teacher, let me make the point that we can properly blame schools when they fail to educate the educable; we can't hold them accountable when parents fill their classrooms with the unteachable.

Finally, we need to put the wasted decade of the '80s rhetoric behind us and get the attention of the business/industry and education leadership—particularly at the local and state levels. We need to articulate forcefully and confidently, with repetition, the steps that need to be taken—organizationally, programmatically and financially—in addressing the human resource crisis in our schools and emerging in the workplace.

But then, looking back to the past decade, we must also recognize that some people never get the message.

Donald M. Clark is the president and chief executive officer of the National Association for Industry-Education Cooperation in Buffalo, N.Y.

Opinions appearing in Perspective are those of the author and are not necessarily shared by Human Resource Executive.

Business-education partnerships in the last decade: rhetoric over substance

by Donald M. Clark

FOR THOSE OF us working in the industry-education cooperative movement in the 1960s and '70s, the last decade was very disappointing in terms of the quality of collaboration between the two sectors.

During the 1980s, we experienced the onset of a human resource crisis that will continue into the 21st century. The reality of changing demographics confronted employers and public education. Employers realized that they were running out of qualified workers and that a company's ability to survive and remain competitive in a highly uncertain international marketplace depended upon the public schools delivering quality human resources to the workplace.

There followed a steady barrage of rhetoric — redundant articles, task force/commission reports, studies and forums on "partnerships-in-education," with particular attention focused on the interaction beween business and the public schools. Further, in the many reports on educational reform following the 1983 release of the publication, "A Nation at Risk," one cannot find any mention of the need for career education — a systematic plan for preparing students for work. As a result, the mismatch between jobs and job seekers continues to grow, and the gap between workforce requirements and student preparation for work widens.

One would have thought that industry, i.e., business, government, labor and the professions — in other words, *the employment community* — and the public schools would have gotten their act together during the '80s and established a broad-based formal structure to address school improvement on a systemwide basis, building on the successful experiences of the industry-education cooperation movement of the previous two decades. Instead, the term "partnerships" surfaced in the literature, a piecemeal approach to employer involvement in public education, and real school reform became a charade.

In the 1970s, for instance, career education became a major force for educational change. Broadly defined, career education is a process aimed at refocusing education in collaboration with industry *at all levels* in ways that will help individuals acquire and utilize the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for each to make work a meaningful, productive and satisfying part of his or her way of living. Career education needs to be a key objective and an integral part of the industry-education collaborative school improvement process if this nation is to meet the pressing human resource needs of the 1990s and beyond. During the last decade, however, with the emphasis on "partnerships," a systemwide career education program has been ignored.

Business participation in the schools during the '80s can be characterized as "tinkering at the margin." It involved low levels of investment with limited objectives, and was conducted on a fragmented, unstructured, duplicative and *ad hoc* basis. Today, for the most part, "partnership" projects continue to be brief, episodic and student oriented. The reality is that the educational reform movement of the '80s has had little, if any, significant impact on improving schools, either organizationally or programmatically. And an entire decade has been wasted by redefining the problems in public education and proposing, if in the main, misdirected solutions.

Dr. Donald M. Clark, president and chief executive officer, National Association for Industry-Education Cooperation (NAIEC).

INDUSTRY-EDUCATION COUNCILS

Industry-education collaboration in the public schools must begin with the recognition that the entire system needs help. And assuming that industry has a central role to play when it leverages its resources to assist in improving elementary and secondary education, it follows that a formal broad-based delivery system — *infrastructure* — needs to be established for substantive longterm joint efforts between the two sectors. The proven mechanism is an Industry-Education Council (IEC) composed of the power structure — the clout — of the area's business, education (public and postsecondary), labor, government and professional communities.

> Career education needs to be a key objective and an integral part of the industry-education collaborative . . . if this nation is to meet the pressing human resource needs of the 1990s and beyond.

IECs are not new. They were established in California and Arizona as early as the mid-1960s, followed by sites in states such as New York, Georgia, Colorado and Alabama. Canadians began moving ahead in organizing IECs in the '80s, while the U.S. was being diverted by the "partnerships-in-education" hype. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce formally adopted the IEC model in the fall of 1988 for local implementation nationwide.

The mission of a formally structured IEC is to foster system-wide school improvement, preparation for work through career education in public and postsecondary educational institutions, and human resource/economic development. An Industry-Education Council can be organized within a school district(s), labor market, or region. Members of an IEC's board of directors include business/industry CEOs, chief officers of public schools and postsecondary institutions, the president of an area Chamber of Commerce, a newspaper publisher, a representative of a board of education/trustees, and labor and government leaders. Their collaborative expertise contributes to the school improvement process in which industry channels its volunteer resources (personnel, facilities, materials and equipment) in a coherent manner into the total academic and vocational program in order to make it more responsive to both student and employer needs. The IEC facilitates the process by focusing on: 1) cooperative planning to include needs assessment, goal setting and program development; 2) curriculum review and revision; 3) intensive, on-going and comprehensive inservice training of faculty, counselors, administrators and other support personnel; 4) upgrading instructional materials and equipment; and 5) improving educational management. This is a far cry from the "business-education partnerships" rhetoric we've been drowning in for the past decade.

CONCLUSION

Looking ahead, let's drop the buzzwords such as "restructuring" education (we need to concentrate on refocusing/redirecting the total school program), "competitiveness," "workforce 2000," and most of all, "partnerships," and get down to some very basic steps in organizing industry and education (public and postsecondary) into a broad formal structure/alliance — an Industry Education Council with support staff — and start the long road of incremental and substantive collaboration in fostering school improvement.

Fortunately, industry is slowly coming to the realization that it has a far greater role and investment in improving the total school program rather than continuing to concentrate its re-

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sources on a school here and a classroom there. Employers are finally recognizing that projects such as adopt-a-school, career days and field trips — although needed and useful — are *secondary* to the goal of helping effect change in education.

As we enter the 1990s, industry and education leaders must recognize that the stakes are too high, the time too short, and the human resource problem too important for us to continue to redefine the problems in our schools and to interact on a piecemeal basis. Building a collaborative infrastructure — the delivery system — that will foster educational improvement by emphasizing preparation for work will require hard work, muscle, discipline, patience, commitment and money. But education and employers cannot afford anything less in responding to the economically uncertain times that confront them now and in the 21st century. ■

Donald M. Clark is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Association for Industry-Education Cooperation (NAIEC), which focuses on improving industry-education joint efforts for fostering school improvement, preparation for work, and human resource/economic development.

Internationally recognized for his work in promoting industry-education cooperation, Dr. Clark has consulted to, and served on advisory panels for, agencies such as the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, American Institutes for Research, American Vocational Assocation, state departments of education, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

For further information about NAIEC or about the Industry-Education Councils described in this article, write to: Dr. Donald M. Clark, President and CEO, NAIEC, 235 Hendricks Blvd., Buffalo, New York 14226-3304; or call: (716) 834-7047.

GUEST COMMENTARY

by Dr. Donald M. Clark, President and CEO, National Association of Industry-Education Cooperation

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL
Industry's role in systemwide school improvement

The central role of industry (business, labor, government, and the professions - the employment community) in education collaboration is furthering school improvement, preparation for work, and, in turn, human resource and economic development. This has been the focus of employer involvement in our schools since the movement got under way 2-1/2 decades ago, except during the '80s.

Prior to the last decade, industry and education started forming systemwide formal alliances/structures - Industry-Education Councils - directed at school improvement, i. e., helping reshape, refocus, and redirect the total academic and vocational program at the public and postsecondary level so that it would be more RESPONSIVE to the needs of students (youth, adults, and special-needs groups) and employers. IECs were organized in states such as California, Arizona, and New York beginning in the mid-'60s. The career education movement followed in the '70s.

Thus, by 1980, industry-education collaboration was prepared to move more intensively into the school improvement process with an emphasis on career education in preparing students for work. However, employers became distracted with the onset of "business-education partnerships," a phrase that surfaced inside the Washington beltway and led, for the most part, to a decade of fragmented, uncoordinated, unstructured, duplicative, and ad hoc interaction between industry and the primary target group in education - the public schools.

The result was employer preoccupation with short-term student-oriented activities such as field trips, adopt-a-school, guest speakers, and internships - all needed and useful - which have nothing to do with school improvement. More specifically, industry's involvement in education over the last decade can be characterized as interacting with a school here and a classroom there - tinkering at the margin - while failing to recognize that the entire system needs help.

In other words, business-education partnerships during the past decade have had little, if any, impact in producing fundamental changes in the education system, the curriculum, the overall educational process, or the acquisition of basic skills. Nor have they significantly affected the dropout rates of participating schools.

Yet, here we are in 1991 with a growing human resource crisis in the workplace and schools, a misdirected school reform movement with a top-down approach from the nation's capital, no systematic or systemwide plan, such as career education, for preparing students for work, and business-education interaction, for the most part, a charade.

We're drowning in buzzwords such as educational restructuring, economic competitiveness, choice, school-based management, and accountability. The policy-issue types and researchers continue to dominate the nation's education agenda calling for a renaissance or revolution in our schools when, from a practitioner's standpoint, this is nonsense. Education doesn't need to be "reformed." It's parents that need reform in providing a stable and reinforcing home situation that prepares children for learning PRIOR to entering the classroom. Further, education should not be the whipping boy for the major ills in our society or US industry's problems in competing in the world economic arena.

Let's stop the rhetoric on "school reform" and focus on improving - effecting change in - education where it has traditionally occurred, FROM THE GROUND UP. Industry needs to understand, as it did in the '60s and '70s, that the entire system needs help; and if it is to use its resources in a cost-effective manner, step one is to GET ORGANIZED and establish a formal, broad alliance/structure - such as an IEC.

A local IEC with a board of directors representing influential leaders from business, education, labor, government, and the professions and an executive director with staff and budget support can then get down to (1) improving schools systemwide - a process highlighting staff development, curriculum revision with integrated career education at all levels, upgrading instructional materials and equipment, and improving educational management and (2) serving as a catalyst for employer training needs. Anything less amounts to cheerleading and well-intentioned horsing around.

Both industry and education practitioners need to tune out the rhetoric and redundant studies and forums on school reform and business-education linkages during the '80s and tune in to the lessons of the previous two decades focusing on the REAL REASON FOR COLLABORATION - the development of an academic and vocational program that better meets the needs of both students and employers.

This will require a much broader level of commitment of resources by industry to help EFFECTIVELY LEVERAGE CHANGE in the total educational program. Frankly, industry's survival depends on a responsive human resource delivery system - education. Also, educators need to understand that they can't go it alone in furthering systemwide school improvement - they need to unify their resources with industry, using a broad infrastructure to make a difference. Both sectors now need to consider what is at stake and ask themselves, "Do we care enough to try?" If they don't, they must estimate what they stand to lose.

Don Clark's views are based on 34 years in education as a former public school teacher, district school administrator, certified school superintendent, undergraduate and graduate school professor and administrator along with experience as a corporate manager, retired US Army colonel, and radio and television public affairs commentator. He has been a leader in industry-education collaboration for 21 years and is in his 12th year as president and CEO of NAIEC, 235 Hendricks Blvd, Buffalo NY 14226, (716) 834-7047. Don will be serving on *Education in the Public Eye's* Editorial Advisory Board during the 1991-1992 academic year.